

The Jesuitesses in the Bookshop: Catholic Lay Sisters' Participation in the Dutch Book Trade, 1650–1750

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The institutional Catholic Church in seventeenth-century Amsterdam relied on the work of inspired women who lived under an informal religious rule and called themselves 'spiritual daughters'. Once the States of Holland banned all public exercise of Catholicism, spiritual daughters leveraged the ambiguity of their religious status to pursue unique roles in their communities as catechists, booksellers and enthusiastic consumers of print. However, their lack of a formal order caused consternation among their Catholic confessors. It also disturbed Reformed authorities in their communities, who branded them 'Jesuitesses'. Whilst many scholars have documented this tension between inspired daughter and institutional critique, it has yet to be contextualized fully within the literary culture of the Dutch Republic. This article suggests that due to the de-institutionalized status of the spiritual daughters and the discursive print culture that surrounded them, public criticism replaced direct censure by Catholic and Reformed authorities as the primary impediment to their inspired work.

Among the devoutly Reformed in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, a woman named Hendrikje Kool had developed a reputation for perpetuating blasphemy. Though she lived mere metres from the Oude Kerk, the oldest church in the city and one of the centres of Reformed life, she became notorious for selling printed material as egregiously heretical as hagiography, Roman Catholic liturgy and anti-Reformed polemic from the bookshop in her home. This

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house, nicknamed ‘the Golden Compass’, after the sign outside the shop, had been home to multiple generations of her illustrious Catholic printing and publishing family.¹ On 30 September 1697, Hendrikje died, and the local bailiff Adriaan van Paddenburg recorded and valued an inventory of her estate, including a separately labelled section for the contents of her bookstore. This probate inventory, logged in the book of the notary Joannes Commelin and certified on 19 October, records more than two hundred titles in her possession, with many more parcels of unnamed pamphlets and tracts bound or packaged together. Hendrikje’s prominent position as sole bookseller and the overseer of her household was unusual. This was especially true as her family’s printing press had shut down years before and she had a brother, Andries, still living. However, by involving herself in the Catholic book trade, she was participating in an important shared phenomenon for women of her stature in seventeenth-century Amsterdam.²

Hendrikje belonged to a particular group of women in the Dutch Republic who called themselves ‘spiritual daughters’. Although Catholic women in a publicly Reformed country did not have the option of joining a conventional religious order, they could live chaste, prayer-filled, contemplative lives, although they could not commit to a formal rule. While these women would have faced the normative dichotomy of marriage or the cloister elsewhere, the scarcity of formal Catholic organization in the Dutch Republic gave spiritual daughters significant autonomy. Concerned by this dearth of recognized structure, both Catholic and Reformed institutional authorities employed mechanisms of print to constrain and criticize spiritual daughters. Their Catholic confessors, usually missionary priests, were troubled by spiritual daughters’ self-directed devotional practices. In response, they wrote rules of life for them to follow in the form of published devotional prayer manuals. Reformed magistrates,

¹ This golden compass was probably a reference to the iconic Plantin-Moretus printing house in Antwerp. Catholic printers and booksellers in the Dutch Republic regularly borrowed imprints and iconography from their co-religionists to the south: Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World: Making and Trading Books in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven, CT, 2019), 343–4. My own forthcoming doctoral thesis, which investigates printing for the Catholic community in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, will explore this phenomenon more comprehensively.

² Amsterdam, Amsterdam City Archives, Archief van de Notarissen ter Standplaats Amsterdam (5075), Johannes Commelin (226), Minuutacten no. 5619, fols 542r–566r.

perturbed by their active work in education and bookselling, castigated them in pamphlets, broadsheets and other forms of public print. This material labelled them 'Jesuitesses' and portrayed them as dangerous tools of the papacy, motivated by 'papist impudence'.³

By the seventeenth century, Amsterdam had grown into a pre-eminent global capital of printing and bookselling. Its urban population became accustomed to seeing the printed word in every form: in elaborately bound volumes, mass-printed pamphlets and broadsheet ordinances posted on buildings. The city's diverse and sprawling urban markets and relative lack of censorship cultivated an uncommon level of freedom. An interested party could find any kind of confessional book, whether printed locally or imported from foreign printing firms and sold at local bookshops. The Dutch Republic, and the province of Holland in particular, also boasted an unusually large reading population for the era. This constant production of printed material created new forms of public discourse, in which political and confessional groups could compete for public opinion using propaganda and polemic.⁴ For members of the minority Catholic community, common access to religious books and the printed words of their co-religionists provided spiritual solace, as well as a means to educate their children and proselytize their neighbours. As a result, Catholic books made up a significant part of the Amsterdam book trade. The lack of institutionalization that characterized this trade made it an ideal world in which spiritual daughters could participate.

Recent scholarship has increasingly acknowledged the instrumental role of spiritual daughters in the work of the missionary Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic. Since Eugenia Thiessing's foundational work in the 1930s, more recent generations of scholars such as Marit Monteiro, Joke Spaans and Marieke Abels have addressed

³ The accusation of 'papist' or 'popish impudence' was frequently employed by Reformed critics to condemn a variety of Catholic practice. My forthcoming thesis will discuss the political use of this term in greater detail. See also Christine Kooi, 'Popish Impudence: The Perseverance of the Roman Catholic Faithful in Calvinist Holland, 1572–1620', *SCJ* 26 (1995), 75–85.

⁴ Pettegree and der Weduwen, *Bookshop of the World*, 9–17; see *ibid.* 321–44 (for Catholic books), 153–9 (for literacy). For more on print and public discourse, see Jan Bloemendal and Arjan van Dixhoorn, 'Early Modern Literary Cultures and Public Opinion', in Jan Bloemendal, Arjan van Dixhoorn and Elsa Strietman, eds, *Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Low Countries, 1450–1650* (Leiden, 2011), 1–35.

new aspects of the spiritual daughters' extraordinary existence. These studies have branched into regional investigations, published transcriptions of the spiritual daughters' writings and inquiries into their role in religious controversy.⁵ While these studies do discuss the reading habits of spiritual daughters, these have yet to be placed into the wider context of the critical role print played both in Catholic minority culture and in mechanisms of public discourse in the Dutch Republic. It is within this literary context, this article proposes, that tensions between inspired women and the dual institutional critiques from Catholic confessors and Reformed authorities found their fullest expression.

Using the probate inventory of Hendrikje Kool and the print culture of Amsterdam as exemplars, this article will discuss the spiritual daughters' participation in the Dutch book trade as educators, readers and booksellers. It will also detail the resulting criticism of this work by Catholic and Reformed authorities in manuscript and print. While Reformed ministers and magistrates used polemical writing to criticize spiritual daughters in their roles as educators and booksellers, their Catholic confessors attempted to exercise oversight over what their confessants read through published prayer manuals. Despite these efforts, spiritual daughters such as Hendrikje could pursue inspired spiritual work in the book trade and gain access to a wide variety of reading material. Public criticism became the primary, and sometimes exclusive, impediment to this work. This lack of effective oversight was due to two central and interconnected factors: the ambiguity of the spiritual daughters' roles in church and society as

⁵ Eugenia Thiessing was the first to argue for the consideration of spiritual daughters on their own terms in her doctoral thesis, *Over klopjes en kwezels* (Utrecht, 1935), defending their active religious lifestyle as something chosen rather than a result of pressure by missionary clergy. Marit Monteiro complemented this with her study of representations of spiritual daughters in contemporary literature, *Geestelijke maagden. Leven tussen klooster en wereld in Noord-Nederland gedurende de zeventiende eeuw* (Hilversum, 1996). For regional studies, see Marieke Abels, *Tussen sloer en heilige. Beeld en zelfbeeld van Goudse en Haarlemse kloen in de zeventiende eeuw* (Utrecht, 2010); Joke Spaans, *De Levens der Maechden. Het verhaal van een religieuze vrouwengemeenschap in de eerste helft van de zeventiende eeuw* (Hilversum, 2012), a study of the De Hoek community in Haarlem. The latter study also includes a monumental transcription of a manuscript book of *vitae* written by a seventeenth-century spiritual daughter, Catharina (Trijn) Jans Oly. For spiritual daughters' role in the religious schisms that characterized the Dutch Catholic Church in this period, see Gerrit vanden Bosch, 'Pionnen op een schaakbord? De rol van klopjes in de belangenstrijd tussen jezuïeten en seculiere priesters in de Republiek omstreeks 1609–1610', *Trajecta* 3 (2000), 252–83.

semi-religious women, and a broader culture in which the widespread availability of print created a de-institutionalized public space for polemic and persuasion.

BEING CATHOLIC IN THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

Like many seventeenth-century states, the Dutch Republic maintained a strict dichotomy between legal discrimination against, and the practical toleration of, minority religious groups. While every province of the Dutch Republic proscribed the public practice of Catholicism at its inception, the newly dominant Reformed Church did not institute a mandatory policy of conformity.⁶ The Union of Utrecht (1579) guaranteed to every individual freedom of religion and the right not to face persecution for private beliefs. While it allowed Catholics to remain Catholic in private, the States General banned any form of public worship, which in 1581 expanded with the so-called 'Book Edict'. This new policy banned 'offensive and seditious' books, pamphlets, news, songs, ballads or any other written or spoken word that could bring 'the common [person] into error, schism and sedition'.⁷ Though this neither extended to private belief nor mentioned any confession explicitly, the implication for Catholics was clear.

Remaining Catholics developed ways of life and methods of coping with their new status. Though newly a minority, less than a third of the population in Amsterdam, Catholic adherents tended to be more affluent and well connected than other confessional groups.⁸

⁶ Alastair Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London, 1990), 207; K. W. Swart, *William of Orange and the Revolt of the Netherlands*, 2nd edn (Aldershot, 2003), 34–6; James D. Tracy, *The Founding of the Dutch Republic: War, Finance, and Politics in Holland, 1572–1588* (Oxford, 2008), 119–20.

⁷ Quoted and translated in Marianne Roobol, *Disputation by Decree: The Public Disputations between Reformed Ministers and Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert as Instruments of Religious Policy during the Dutch Revolt (1577–1583)* (Leiden, 2010), 172–3; see also Christine Kooi, *Calvinists and Catholics during Holland's Golden Age: Heretics and Idolaters* (Cambridge, 2012), 16–43, 'War and Peace'.

⁸ The precise number of faithful Catholics in cities and rural areas of the Netherlands is notoriously difficult to ascertain, not least because of the fluidity of confessional labels in this period: see Carolina Lenarduzzi, *Katholiek in de Republiek. De belevingswereld van een religieuze minderheid 1570–1750* (Nijmegen, 2019), 17, for a recent and useful synthesis of scholarship. For further estimates, see also Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies, *1650: Hard-won Unity* (Assen, 2004), 354; Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), 379–80; Hans Knippenburg, *De*

Since they could not worship publicly, they developed house churches (*huiskerken*), also known as clandestine churches (*schuilkerken*), for sacramental gatherings. By the end of the century, these had developed into ostentatious and elaborate sanctuaries capable of accommodating organs, choirs and rich decorations imported from the Catholic Southern Netherlands.⁹ This regular flamboyance meant that no resident of the town, Catholic or Protestant, could be in any doubt about where these 'secret' churches were. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the city of Amsterdam housed at least twenty-six private Catholic house churches, with forty missionary priests to service the spiritual needs of the lay population.¹⁰ Catholics at all levels were obliged to pay regular bribes to the local sheriff to turn a blind eye to their conventicles and other private religious gatherings.

Even then, they still ran the risk of occasional raids by municipal authorities. In one remarkable case in Utrecht, recorded by Catholic-born diarist and humanist Arnoldus Buchelius, government authorities raided a late-night mass. One woman in the congregation stepped forward, claiming that she had arranged for the mass to take place and was willing to pay a fee if the authorities promised that the eucharistic bread consecrated in the service would not be violated or destroyed. The sum she offered was 20,000 gulden, about forty times the annual salary of a small-town Reformed minister.¹¹ Buchelius, who had since converted to Protestantism, did not record the outcome of this lavish offer. Instead, he bemoaned the tenacity and self-sacrificing blindness of his former faith.

religieuze kaart van Nederland. Omvang en geografische spreiding van de godsdienstige gezindten vanaf de Reformatie tot heden (Assen, 1992), 23–4.

⁹ J. L. M. de Leer, 'De schuilkerk in bedrijf', *Jaarboek de Oranjeboom* 24 (1971), 95–125; F. X. Spiertz, 'Liturgie in de periode van de schuilkerken', in J. A. van der Ven, ed., *Pastoraal tussen ideaal en werkelijkheid* (Kampen, 1985), 121–32; Benjamin J. Kaplan, 'Fictions of Privacy: House Chapels and the Spatial Accommodation of Religious Dissent in Early Modern Europe', *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), 1031–64.

¹⁰ Xander van Eck, *Clandestine Splendor: Paintings for the Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic* (Zwolle, 2008), 111–12.

¹¹ Anecdote from the diary of Buchelius, described by Judith Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius, 1565–1641* (Manchester, 1999), 149.

THE ACTIVE APOSTOLATE OF SPIRITUAL DAUGHTERS

This bribe-offering woman probably belonged to the spiritual daughters. In the latter decades of the sixteenth century, as the ecclesiastical Dutch missionary organization *Missio Hollandica* or *Hollandse Zending* took shape, women who wanted to live as chaste contemplatives began to petition missionary priests to act informally as their confessors. A few communities of beguines remained, and some women elected to join tertiary religious orders. In parallel, a new and separate identity also emerged, with a corresponding plethora of new labels. On the whole, their confessors and ecclesiastical superiors referred to these women as spiritual virgins (*geestelijke maaqden*), emphasizing their virtue. In placards and official decrees, Reformed authorities called them *kloppen* or *klopjes*. However, in many legal documents, such as wills and testaments, as well as instances where their own hands survive, such as book inscriptions, these semi-religious women usually referred to themselves as spiritual daughters (*geestelijke dochters* or *filiae spirituales*). Though Hendrikje Kool's probate inventory was compiled by a Reformed bailiff and a Reformed notary, they maintained this identification, calling her 'Hendrikje Kool, spiritual daughter, who lately resided in her house on the Warmoesstraat under the sign of the compass'.¹² While some women who were beguines or tertiaries also called themselves spiritual daughters, generally the term served as a catch-all for women who wanted to lead active and chaste religious lives but had no formal institutional affiliation.¹³

By the seventeenth century, spiritual daughters had become a ubiquitous part of the religious landscape. Marit Monteiro estimates that five thousand such women lived in the Dutch Republic during

¹² Amsterdam City Archives, Minuutacten no. 5619, fol. 543r. While scholars usually refer to these women as spiritual virgins or *klopjes* or *kloppen*, this language reflects terms largely used by their critics. Since this article aspires to set out differences between institutional expectations of these women and their actual ministry, it seems most appropriate to follow the internal identification of 'spiritual daughter'. For more on the potentially pejorative etymology of *klop*, see Evelyne Verheggen, *Beelden voor passie en hartstocht. Bid- en devotieprenten in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 17de en 18de eeuw* (Zutphen, 2006), 95.

¹³ Ibid. 100. While most spiritual daughters in the Dutch Republic did not identify as beguines (i.e. women who belonged to and lived in a beguinage), most women who were beguines also identified as spiritual daughters. Therefore, I use beguine and spiritual daughter interchangeably when I am talking about women who were also beguines, but this dual label fits only a small minority of spiritual daughters.

the seventeenth century. Some communities had fifty or a hundred members, such as De Star in Amsterdam and De Hoek in nearby Haarlem. These communities had a resident priest who was responsible for hearing confessions and administering sacraments to all the sisters.¹⁴ Like beguines or members of tertiary orders, spiritual daughters who lived on their own found confessors, to whom they made informal vows of chastity and obedience. Both secular and regular clergy were tasked with administering sacraments to hundreds if not thousands of congregants in a wide geographic area, leaving their confessants to provide spiritual solace to those they could not reach. As a result, spiritual daughters frequently shouldered the responsibility in their own parishes for setting up the altar and maintaining house churches and liturgical spaces. They also made house calls and performed emergency baptisms.¹⁵ The community in Haarlem even resurrected pre-Reformation musical traditions, both sung and played on a variety of instruments, including the organ.¹⁶ The reduced scrutiny offered to them by the institutional ambiguity of their position, and the family networks in which they traditionally moved, allowed spiritual daughters to pursue an active apostolate. This would not have been possible had they been able to join a formal monastic order, or been as visible in society as ordained clerics such as their confessors.

SPIRITUAL DAUGHTERS AS EDUCATORS

In the absence of overburdened missionary priests, the roles of evangelist and catechist quickly fell to spiritual daughters. In Amsterdam, a famously diverse and close-quartered city, spiritual daughters needed only to step outside their homes to enter the classroom and the mission field. Legally, the Reformed Church maintained a monopoly on primary school education in order to promote

¹⁴ Marit Monteiro, 'Power in Piety: Inspiration, Ambitions and Strategies of Spiritual Virgins in the Northern Netherlands during the Seventeenth Century', in Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Carmen M. Mangion, eds, *Gender, Catholicism and Spirituality: Women and the Roman Catholic Church in Britain and Europe, 1200–1900* (Basingstoke, 2010), 115–30, at 115.

¹⁵ Charles H. Parker, *Faith on the Margins: Catholics and Catholicism in the Dutch Golden Age* (London, 2008), 44, 142–3.

¹⁶ Lenarduzzi, *Katholiek in de Republiek*, 215–24.

maximum literacy and educate children in the faith of the public church.¹⁷ However, as with so many other aspects of life in the Dutch Republic, the intention of these laws differed significantly from the degree of their execution. While Catholics could not legally be schoolteachers, many flouted these regulations and taught anyway, hoping that the bribe system and the lax implementation of anti-Catholic legislation would continue.¹⁸ Catholic education aimed to counter the narratives of the history books mandated in Reformed schools, which portrayed the Dutch Revolt as a heroic uprising against the oppressive rule of the Catholic Habsburgs. Outside the formal classroom, spiritual daughters recruited through familial and religious networks. They hosted informal schools for Catholic children, gathering and teaching groups in the homes of individuals under the guise of private education. In Amsterdam and Haarlem, the larger communities of spiritual daughters even established residential schools for girls (*maagdenhuizen*).¹⁹

The absence of confessional infrastructure meant that Catholic education was largely provided in private, whether in the home or in house churches. Catechisms, spiritual songbooks and basic educational books allowed for the education in a private setting of children and adults new to the faith. A large body of literature was printed for this purpose, especially in Amsterdam, by families such as the Kools. Catechizing children and educating them in the basic precepts of Catholic theology formed a critical part of overarching missionary strategy. Hendrikje Kool's probate inventory contains a much higher proportion of educational texts such as catechisms and canticle books than a personal Catholic library would: of the titled books, more than a quarter are labelled as one of these types of educational texts. Apart from pamphlets, they are also the least expensive, rarely exceeding one gulden apiece.²⁰ The most frequently appearing title is Heyman Jacobsz, *Sondaeghs schole, ofte Uytlegginge op de euangelien van de sondagen* (*Sunday School, or Description of the Sunday Gospels*),

¹⁷ Leendert F. Groenendijk, 'The Reformed Church and Education during the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic', *DRChH* 85 (2005), 53–70.

¹⁸ Kooi, *Calvinists and Catholics*, 207–9.

¹⁹ Joke Spaans, 'Orphans and Students: Recruiting Boys and Girls for the Holland Mission', in Benjamin J. Kaplan et al., eds, *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands* (Manchester, 2009), 183–99.

²⁰ Amsterdam City Archives, Minuutacten no. 5619, fols 543r–555r.

which had been printed in many editions by the Kool family.²¹ This title retells basic Bible stories through simple rhymes designed for schoolchildren, accompanied by didactic woodcut illustrations. These Bible stories reflect the Sunday lectionary, allowing families to learn alongside the liturgical calendar. This book even includes a note to teachers, reminding them that their students are impressionable ‘white paper’ and what they teach may remain with them forever.²² The basic tenets of Catholic doctrine were packaged into catechisms small and large, educational songs in songbooks and short explanatory treatises. These resources allowed spiritual daughters to catechize and educate children and the poor in their communities.

Unsurprisingly, these activities invited a significant critical response from the wider community. While this educational work was generally encouraged by their confessors and other clerics in the Dutch mission, Reformed consistories protested at the aggressive catechizing of the spiritual daughters. They did so both in internal reports and through printed complaints. The classis of Gouda in 1632 alleged that the missionary efforts of the spiritual daughters in their community were so aggressive that they would sneak into the houses of Reformed neighbours and minister to them on their sickbeds. In 1651, a former nun in Delft reported that she had been jeered at in the street and even physically barricaded in her home by a band of spiritual daughters, who would not let her leave to attend a Reformed service.²³ Their dark, well-worn clothing and visible signs of piety such as rosaries and decorated liturgical books made spiritual daughters easily identifiable. As a result, they faced criticism from consistories and Reformed ministers in their communities for their ostentatious and aggressive strategies of seeking catechumens.²⁴ The synod of South Holland complained bitterly of the ‘popish impudence’ of these efforts.²⁵

²¹ Heyman Jacobsz, *Sondaeghs schole, ofte Uytlegginge op de euangelien van de sondagen* (Louvain [Amsterdam], 1675).

²² Ibid. [383].

²³ Kooi, *Calvinists and Catholics*, 162.

²⁴ See Lenarduzzi, *Katholiek in de Republiek*, 150–8, for a discussion of the spiritual daughters’ visibility in their communities, sometimes in intentional contrast with the garb of priests.

²⁵ W. C. Knuttel, ed., *Acta der particuliere synoden van Zuid-Holland 1622–1700*, 6 vols (’s-Gravenhage, 1908), 1: 277; Kooi, *Calvinists and Catholics*, 76.

Catholic schools for children run by spiritual daughters also achieved enough success to attract controversy. In one case the local lord, unable to eliminate the schools or the women themselves completely, had to insist that they at least include some Reformed books in their curriculum.²⁶ Reformed consistories protested that spiritual daughters were aggressively circulating catechisms and flouting the established laws on the education of children. A series of edicts in the 1630s and 1640s by the States of Holland castigated the spiritual daughters specifically, as well as their teaching of ‘papist superstition’.²⁷ The synod of Gelderland lamented in 1658 that ‘*kloppen* schools will cause papist impudence to awaken superstition’.²⁸ These complaints about spiritual daughters’ teaching and catechizing increased in frequency until well into the eighteenth century, when Catholic schools became a more established and accepted part of the Dutch landscape.²⁹

Whilst their Catholic confessors and ecclesiastical authorities were supportive of these efforts, they also worked to exercise oversight. In Amsterdam, the *maagdenhuis* grew to the extent that in 1685, the priest-confessor of the Begijnhof, David van der Mye, compiled a list of new rules for its operation.³⁰ This included supervision by himself and four other priests, as well as their insistence on catechizing the male students. New procedures also regulated the collection of alms for the poor, set out guidelines for family visits and limited how many children could join. The proliferation and importance of the printed Catholic catechism also caused significant controversy; this focused on the use of certain editions in teaching, generating dozens of editions adding to, correcting or criticizing their explication of Catholic doctrine.³¹ Altogether, schools run by spiritual daughters caused dismay among Reformed authorities, who accused them in print and manuscript of corrupting impressionable youth. Missionary clerics supported the spiritual daughters as an instrumental part of

²⁶ Arnhem, Gelders Archief, Het archief van de Heeren en Graven van Culemborg (0370), no. 3058.

²⁷ Cf. Parker, *Faith on the Margins*, 142; see also Monteiro, *Geestelijke Maagden*, 89.

²⁸ Gelders Archief, Synode van Gelderland (0336), no. 2, Article 10 (1658).

²⁹ Kooi, *Calvinists and Catholics*, 166.

³⁰ Haarlem, North Holland Archives, Oud-Katholiek Bisdom Haarlem (225), no. 377.

³¹ For example, the controversy set out in Utrecht, Utrecht Archives, Apostolische Vicarissen van de Hollandse zending (1003), no. 407. My thesis will address this topic in greater detail.

Catholic mission strategy, so long as they followed the regulations laid down by their confessors.

SPIRITUAL DAUGHTERS AS READERS

Extant personal and library inventories show that literate, affluent spiritual daughters had significant interests in reading and collecting religious books. Hendrikje Kool's bookshop and its contents demonstrate the spiritual importance and profitability of inexpensive devotional and liturgical prayer books. Spiritual daughters found their religious pedigree in the medieval Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life, who had seen the integration of reading and prayer as sacrosanct. This culminated in the creation of *rapiaria*, personal notebooks that functioned as repositories of prayers, quotations and notes. The most famous of these was Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, which became a bestseller in the seventeenth century among both Reformed and Catholic readers.³² The spiritual daughters in Amsterdam and the other populous cities of Holland often belonged to noble or upper-class merchant families. This gave them access to books and the education needed to read them from an early age. Many female members of influential Catholic printing families in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, such as the Aeltsz, Kool, Hartoghvelt and van Metelen families, became spiritual daughters.³³

Spiritual daughters had been active consumers of Catholic books since the early days of the Republic. When a spiritual daughter died, she would often leave books to her spiritual sisters, sometimes accompanied by requests to pray for her soul. In one such example in the Radboud University Special Collections, the giver, Catharina Simons, gifted the book to her spiritual sister Maria van Heel 'as a reminder, so that whoever gets this book after us will pray for the love of God for the two of us'.³⁴ Especially within established communities such as

³² For more on *rapiaria* and the *Imitatio Christi* as well as its sixteenth- and seventeenth-century publishing record, see Maximilian von Habsburg, *Catholic and Protestant Translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425–1650: From Late Medieval Classic to Early Modern Bestseller* (Farnham, 2011), 31–48, 'The *Imitatio Christi* and the *Devotio Moderna*', especially 32–3.

³³ This is well documented in Lienke Paulina Leuven, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam door katholieken gedreven tijdens de Republiek* (Epe, 1951), 28.

³⁴ Nijmegen, Radboud University Library, Hs 325 no. 1, *Het Gebedenboek van Maria van Heel* (n.pl., 1666). For more analysis of this text, see Verheggen, *Beelden voor passie en*

De Hoek in Haarlem, books like these could pass through generations of spiritual daughters, given as gifts with similar promises to pray for the salvation of their previous owners.³⁵ Claertje Pieters Breevliet, Hendrikje's cousin, was one of thirty women who attended the services of priest Willem Schep in a house church on the Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal, just down the street from the Begijnhof in Amsterdam. When she died in 1670, she remembered each individual sister in her will with the bequest of a devotional book and a 'little print'.³⁶

Giving books as gifts could be both personal and institutional. In her will, made in 1676, Maria van Brakel, a noblewoman and spiritual daughter from Utrecht who spent most of her adult life in Haarlem, left twenty-five gulden for the improvement of the choir and the repair of the organ for her funerary mass, which specifically included the mending of songbooks for the choir.³⁷ In 1687, Amsterdam beguine Anna Vechters donated a sizeable collection of texts to the Begijnhof. This included a Blaeu atlas, one of the most expensive books of the seventeenth century, a thirty-seven-volume history of the ecumenical councils and several richly illustrated travel books. She gave these books in memory of her brother Jan, a Jesuit priest, on the condition that a mass be read for his soul every year.³⁸ The rector of the Begijnhof, David van der Mye, used this donation to found an institutional library. Vechters's donation was an exceptional one; in most cases, like the large De Hoek community in Haarlem, women retained their own private book collections, with the exception of common-use liturgical books.³⁹ A catalogue made of the Begijnhof library in 1891 records more than eight hundred sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious books.⁴⁰ In this way,

hartstocht, 82–3; Feike Dietz, 'Gedrukte boeken, met de pen gelezen. Sporen van leesinterpretaties in de religieuze manuscriptcultuur', *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 26 (2010), 152–71.

³⁵ Verheggen, *Beelden voor passie en hartstocht*, 156.

³⁶ Jan Piet Filedt Kok, Erik Hinterding and Jan van der Waals, 'Jan Harmensz. Muller as Printmaker: II', *Print Quarterly* 11 (1994), 351–78, at 352.

³⁷ Gelders Archief, Huis de Doornenburg (0382), no. 246, no. 3, fol 2r. Though Maria did not specify where this mass was to be held, it is possible if not likely that it would have been in the chapel of De Hoek in Haarlem, which had both an organ and a regular choir made up of spiritual daughters: Spaans, *De Levens der Maechden*, 92–3.

³⁸ Amsterdam City Archives, Archief van het Begijnhof (740), no. 30.

³⁹ Spaans, *De Levens der Maechden*, 133–5.

⁴⁰ Antoine Flament, *Catalogue der Bibliotheek van het rectoraat des Begghinhofs te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1891).

books passed from sister to sister, laden with enormous personal and sacred significance.

This well-documented relationship between spiritual daughters and books means that, according to Evelyne Verheggen, the cities in Holland that produced the best-known devotional engravings were also home to the largest populations of spiritual daughters. Primarily this included Haarlem and Amsterdam, but also Gouda and Delft.⁴¹ In their contemplation, spiritual daughters read and meditated on images and lives of saints, prayer books, printed pilgrimage literature and other kinds of simple devotional material. Some were praised by their sisters for their pious reading: Maritgen Isbrants, a spiritual daughter in de Hoek, 'read so many spiritual books that her heart was filled with sacred lessons', according to one of her sisters.⁴² Claes Braau, a seventeenth-century Catholic printer and bookseller based in Haarlem, printed a large variety of devotional books, pamphlets and broadsheets. Like most Catholic printers in the Dutch Republic, he misrepresented the city of publication in his imprints, claiming to be located in Antwerp or Louvain, but these same imprints also contain the genuine location of his shop in Haarlem, on the same street as the beguinage.⁴³ The close proximity of Catholic printers and booksellers, as well as the familial connections of many spiritual daughters to the industry, provided avenues for them to acquire religious and devotional material.

While spiritual daughters' confessors and ecclesiastical superiors exercised some oversight over the daughters' educational efforts, they dedicated much more time and energy to addressing the women's devotional pursuits. Spiritual daughters had neither a formal rule nor any kind of institutionally codified informal rule. Priests in both the Northern and Southern Netherlands wrote and published devotional manuals providing instructions for their contemplation and religious practice, intending this genre to serve instead of a rule.⁴⁴ These books were almost always printed in vernacular

⁴¹ Verheggen, *Beelden voor passie en hartstocht*, 244.

⁴² According to a *vita* by her religious sister Trijn Jans Oly: Monteiro, *Geestelijke Maagden*, 136.

⁴³ Gabriëlle Dorren and Garrelt Verhoeven, 'De twee gezichten van Claes Braau (circa 1636–1707). Een katholieke drukker en boekverkoper in Haarlem', *Holland* 26 (1994), 235–73.

⁴⁴ Parker, *Faith on the Margins*, 130.

Dutch in an accessible octavo format; they were produced in large quantity in Amsterdam and also imported from Antwerp, the print capital of the Catholic Southern Netherlands. While lack of a formal rule enabled the active work of the spiritual daughters in the book trade, their confessors and superiors in the mission sought to use these devotional manuals to address every aspect of a spiritual daughter's life, including daily offices, methods of contemplation, reading, eating and even sleeping.⁴⁵ In the early decades of the seventeenth century, some also emphasized the importance and value of work as an expression of piety and holiness. However, in later decades this changed to a focus on private devotion, as the demographic of spiritual daughters shifted increasingly towards aristocratic and noble women.⁴⁶

In these manuals, confessors encouraged spiritual daughters to read, although only in a capacity that emphasized humility and obedience. Most writers agreed on the value of reading as a supplement to prayer. The leader of the Dutch Mission, Vicar Apostolic Johannes van Neercassel, argued in his 1670 treatise *Bevestighingh in 't Geloof en Troost in Vervolghingh* (*Confirmation in Faith and Comfort in Persecution*) that prayer and the reading of devotional texts were tools needed to maintain the faith and survive Reformed repression.⁴⁷ The availability of a huge variety of devotional books, whether printed locally in Amsterdam or imported from Antwerp and Cologne, was regarded as a spiritual benefit to the souls of the Catholics living *in partibus infidelium*, in the lands of the unbelievers. In his prayer manual *De Weg der Suyverheyt van d'Hollandse maegden* (*The Way of Purity of the Dutch Virgins*), Jesuit Willem Schoenius devoted an entire chapter to the 'spiritual reading of the virgins'. He exhorted them to read 'daily and half-hourly', noting that 'the reading of spiritual books is a sister to prayer, and a great helper to the self'. He even included a prayer to be said before commencing to read a

⁴⁵ Monteiro discusses this at length in *Geestelijke Maagden*, especially 122–204.

⁴⁶ Joke Spaans, 'Time for Prayer and Time for Work: Rule and Practice among Catholic Lay Sisters in the Dutch Republic', in R. N. Swanson, ed., *The Use and Abuse of Time in Christian History*, SCH 37 (Woodbridge, 2002), 161–72, at 166–9. For more on spiritual daughters and nobility, see Jaap Geraerts, *Patrons of the Old Faith* (Leiden, 2018), 190–249, 'Shaping the *Missio Hollandica*', especially 203–5.

⁴⁷ Joannes Baptista van Neercassel, *Bevestighingh in 't Geloof en Troost in Vervolghingh* (Brussels, 1670), 357–67.

spiritual book.⁴⁸ However, Schoenius also cautioned that reading should be done not in a spirit of curiosity but rather out of obedience and a desire to submit to what the book dictated. In a similar manual, *De leeder Jacobs* (*Jacob's Ladder*, 1670), dedicated to the holy lives of the virgins in Holland, secular priest Joannes Lindeborn wrote that literature was an essential part of contemplation: 'reading follows prayer, and prayer follows reading'.⁴⁹ Both authors restricted their readers to a corpus of acceptable texts, mostly classics such as St Augustine's *Confessions*, *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, and the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St Francis de Sales. To stray beyond texts already established by the church as canonical and instructive, they cautioned, violated the readers' or daughters' pledges of obedience to their confessors.⁵⁰

Ironically, in the extant registers and library records for communities of spiritual daughters it is not clear that these manuals were widely owned and read. In her monograph, Marit Monteiro outlines a central corpus of thirty-four devotional manuals published before 1710, all intended for use by spiritual daughters. Of these, whilst all but two were published in Hendrikje's lifetime, her inventory includes only two: Schoenius's *Way of Purity* and the *vita* of a spiritual daughter, Joanna van Randenraedt, written by a Jesuit.⁵¹ The Begijnhof library, in almost eight hundred sixteenth- and seventeenth-century titles, contains only one of these thirty-four, Lindeborn's text in both Latin and Dutch editions, although it includes several dozen other titles by authors on the list.⁵² Of course, copies of these could have been owned by individuals but not sold in bookshops run by spiritual daughters or preserved in institutional libraries. However, the absence of these manuals dedicated to the spiritual daughters from their own

⁴⁸ 'Oh Holy Spirit, light my mind and my heart with your divine grace, so that I will want to know and accomplish your will': Willem Schoenius, *De Weg der Suyverheyt van d'Hollantse maegden* (Antwerp [Haarlem], 1685), 294–8 (prayer at 296).

⁴⁹ Joannes Lindeborn, *De leeder Jacobs* (Antwerp [Amsterdam], 1670), 219.

⁵⁰ Spaans, *De Levens der Maechden*, 133–40; Verheggen, *Beelden voor passie en hartstocht*, 51–2.

⁵¹ Amsterdam City Archives, Minuutacten no. 5619, fols 544v (Schoenius), 547v, 548r (Joanna van Randenraedt); Monteiro, *Geestelijke Maagden*, 355–60.

⁵² Flament, *Catalogus*, 89. Since this library was used continuously after the seventeenth century, it is impossible to know for sure how soon after publication sixteenth- and seventeenth-century titles entered the collection. However, it is still interesting to note the lack of this particular kind of devotional book.

bookshops and collections is conspicuous, especially given the presence of many other small-format devotional titles.

SPIRITUAL DAUGHTERS IN THE BOOK TRADE

While spiritual daughters invested in the book trade as readers and collectors from an early stage, the prosperous Amsterdam market offered a new opportunity for the industrious: participation as printers and booksellers. These women's involvement in the book trade was in and of itself not extraordinary in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Women had worked as printers, publishers and booksellers since the introduction of the printing press, and it was not unusual for the widow of a male printer to inherit the family business after his death, continuing to print and sell new editions under either her husband's name or her own.⁵³ Spiritual daughters sold theological works, devotional engravings and even religious paraphernalia such as rosaries. They worked from their family homes, at book stalls or door-to-door as itinerant vendors.

Although most spiritual daughters in the Amsterdam book trade worked as booksellers, those with families in the industry could sometimes pursue exceptional opportunities as printers and publishers. Geertruy, Maria and Catharina Aeltz, daughters of the Amsterdam Catholic printer Herman Aeltz, probably became spiritual daughters in the last years of the seventeenth century. When their father died in 1696, they, along with their brother Allard, inherited his sprawling and profitable business. Over the decades that followed, they continued to print liturgical and devotional Catholic books under the name 'the heirs of Herman Aeltz'.⁵⁴ According to the Short-Title Catalogue Netherlands, their output in the early years of the eighteenth century included folio missals and lives of saints intended for use in the missionary diocese of Utrecht. It also included an

⁵³ For a useful summary, see Paul Hoftijzer, 'Women in the Early Modern Dutch Book Trade', in Suzanna van Dijk, Lia van Gemert and Sheila Ottway, eds, *Writing the History of Women's Writing: Toward an International Approach* (Amsterdam, 2001), 211–22.

⁵⁴ Leuven, *De Boekhandel te Amsterdam*, 28, 60, 65. It is difficult to know exactly for how long Geertruy, Maria and Catharina worked in this business; the Short-Title Catalogue Netherlands, at: <<https://www.kb.nl/en/organisation/research-expertise/for-libraries/short-title-catalogue-netherlands-stcn>>, records sixteen titles printed by the 'heirs of Herman Aeltz' between 1697 and 1786, implying that multiple generations of printers in the Aeltz family used this designation.

educational play about the life of St Elizabeth of Hungary, written by a woman, Anna Maria Krul.⁵⁵ However, it was much more common for spiritual daughters, supplied by local print shops or booksellers importing religious texts from the Catholic Southern Netherlands, to sell the books themselves.

Hendrikje Kool's role as sole bookseller in her family's shop was unusual, especially given the previous prominence of her family in the print industry. Although near to the Reformed Oude Kerk, her home on the Warmoesstraat was also very close to several other Catholic printers and bookbinders. The Kool family had printed a high volume of Catholic works throughout the seventeenth century, including elaborate devotional engravings and a series of almanacs, although the family press had been closed down and the woodcut blocks and copper plates sold many years before Hendrikje's death. However, the presence of several unused reams of valuable paper in her probate inventory suggest that she still possessed and sold the family's leftover wares.⁵⁶ This stock reflects the family's long-standing interest in producing small-format devotional and prayer books, including almanacs, books of hours and rosary books.

These books, usually either printed in Amsterdam under a false imprint or imported from the Southern Netherlands, sold for an average of less than a gulden apiece. This was a manageable investment for a Catholic family of some means. Unfortunately, the compiler of the probate inventory, bailiff van Paddenburg, had no interest in nuanced distinctions between different types of liturgical and devotional prayer books, probably because he was Reformed. Many entries consist simply of phrases like 'A Latin prayer book', a 'prayer book for vespers', or 'a communion book', estimated at different values due to factors such as size and binding which are not made explicit in the description. This makes these books difficult to match to known editions. However, van Paddenburg does note carefully the worth of the books, especially those with valuable material aspects like clasps, gilded pages, French bindings and shagreen, all of which increased their value.⁵⁷ Altogether the value of Hendrikje's bookshop totalled

⁵⁵ [Anna Maria Krul], *De werken van barmhartigheid, vertoond in't leven van den heiligen Elizabeth ... van Hongaryen ... Leerzaam zinspel* (Amsterdam, 1721).

⁵⁶ Kok, Hinterding and van der Waals, 'Muller as Printmaker', 352–4; Amsterdam City Archives, Minuutacten no. 5619, fols 542r–566r.

⁵⁷ Amsterdam City Archives, Minuutacten no. 5619, fols 552r–555r.

four hundred gulden, a little less than the average annual salary of a Reformed minister, alongside further possessions and household goods worth more than a thousand gulden. While the bailiff's descriptions are tantalizingly vague, the size of the bookshop's inventory and the genres of the listed entries cover a wide variety of subjects and formats. These range from small packets of catechisms and tracts to large illustrated liturgical books.

Hendrikje Kool's family bookshop was exceptional among the population of spiritual daughters selling books in Amsterdam. In most cases, these women operated stalls and small shops in areas known for high concentrations of Catholics, especially near house churches.⁵⁸ A number of especially popular book stands became well known in Amsterdam during the second half of the seventeenth century, many of which are known to have been run by spiritual daughters even if their names were not preserved. One of these stands was located outside the Franciscan church nicknamed *'t Boompje* ('the tree'), and was run by a spiritual daughter, Anna Keyser. Another was located in the Jewish neighbourhood outside the Mozes en Aäronkerk, and a third stood outside the Augustinian church (nicknamed *de Ster*, 'the star'). These stands sold or were stocked with not only theological and devotional books, but also almanacs, popular prints and devotional images.⁵⁹ Catholic books were also particularly suited to informal networks of distribution. This made the itinerant sale of religious and devotional books profitable and rewarding for spiritual daughters, who could sell their wares more inconspicuously than could Jesuits or other members of the clergy, and as a result were very effective in this trade.⁶⁰

Spiritual daughters' success as booksellers perturbed the Reformed majorities in their communities. However, this rarely translated into direct action against their work. Instead, as the classis of Amsterdam wrote in a resolution to its ministers in 1639, it was better to 'preach against popery, disprove thoroughly its principal arguments, refute completely its circulated books, visit households often, and if possible, confront the priests or at least the papists'.⁶¹ Authors of

⁵⁸ Hoftijzer, 'Women in the Early Modern Dutch Book Trade', 215; Leuven, *De Boekhandel te Amsterdam*, 42.

⁵⁹ Verheggen, *Beelden voor passie en hartstocht*, 241; Leuven, *De Boekhandel te Amsterdam*, 28.

⁶⁰ Jeroen Salman, *Peddars and the Popular Press: Itinerant Distribution Networks in England and the Netherlands 1600–1850* (Leiden, 2013), 196–204.

⁶¹ Resolution translated and cited in Kooi, *Calvinists and Catholics*, 78.

all confessions regularly used polemical pamphlets and broadsheets to evangelize and persuade readers in the Dutch Republic.⁶² These published materials from Reformed ministers and magistrates portrayed spiritual daughters as both insidious papists and also ridiculous objects of satire, using deeply gendered anti-Catholic rhetoric.⁶³ Samuel Ampzing, a Reformed minister in Haarlem, wrote a polemical pamphlet against the actions of the spiritual daughters, referring to them by the ultimate pejorative, 'Jesuitesses'. 'Other cities and areas', he wrote, 'are not beset with a swarm of crawling ants ... in a dirty papist anthill, yes, even in a formal cloister, nesting and decaying at the same time'.⁶⁴ In 1617, a pamphlet entitled *Favlse position ofte Valschen regel van practijcke der Paepscher Kramers ende Koop-lieden* (*The False Position, or False Rules of the Practice of Popish Pedlars and Merchants*) conflated the stereotypical pushiness of the itinerant salesperson with the aggressive conversion strategy of evangelistic Catholics.⁶⁵ Hendrikje's family came under particular fire for their production of almanacs. In one pamphlet published in Amsterdam, Reformed minister Caspar Coolhaes complained bitterly about the proliferation of 'papist almanacs' that would cause the common people to believe falsehoods.⁶⁶

This controversy and the success of spiritual daughters as book-sellers attracted criticism not only from Reformed authorities but

⁶² The importance of pamphleteering in both religious and political discourse in the Dutch Republic has been thoroughly discussed. Among many excellent texts, see Joep van Gennip's study on polemical pamphlets written by Jesuits, *Controversen in Context. Een comparatief onderzoek naar de Nederlandstalige controversepublicaties van de jezuieten in de zeventiende-eeuwse Republiek* (Hilversum, 2014); Joke Spaans, *Graphic Satire and Religious Change: The Dutch Republic 1676–1707* (Leiden, 2011); Alastair Duke, *Dissident Identities in the Early Modern Low Countries*, ed. Judith Pollmann and Andrew Spicer (Farnham, 2009).

⁶³ For many anti-Catholic polemicists, women were particularly dangerous figures, representing the most illogical, superstitious and immoral aspects of Catholicism, suited especially to luring away children: Kooi, *Calvinists and Catholics*, 162–4, 209. For a useful comparative analysis of Catholic women in England, see Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY, 1999), especially 16–44, "'Home-bred Enemies': Imagining Catholics'.

⁶⁴ Samuel Ampzing, *Suppressie vande vermynde vergaderinge der iesvuytessen door Vrbanus VIII* (Haarlem, 1632), 4.

⁶⁵ *Favlse position ofte Valschen regel van practijcke der Paepscher Kramers ende Koop-lieden* (Middelburg, 1617), cited in Salman, *Pedlars*, 33–4.

⁶⁶ Caspar Coolhaes, *Christelycke ende stichtelycke vermaningen* (n.pl., 1607); Jeroen Salman, *Populair drukwerk in de Gouden Eeuw. De almanak als lectuur en handelswaar* (Zutphen, 1999), 305.

also from local guilds. The bookkeeper's guild was only founded in Amsterdam in 1662, and whilst Catholics did join they may have faced internal forms of ostracism and repression. Working more informally through family and religious networks, spiritual daughters rarely if ever appeared on guild registers. As a result, they were frequently accused of disrupting the market illegally with their effective bookselling. Spiritual daughters Anna Keyser and Maria de Vries in Amsterdam faced arrest for their illicit retail.⁶⁷ In one case, the guild called for the seizure of a spiritual daughter, Alida Lieftring, for selling too many books without a guild membership. She was fined and obliged to join the guild, but afterwards permitted to continue her business.⁶⁸

HENDRIKJE'S MISSION

While Reformed authorities had little interest in the reading practices of spiritual daughters, they used polemic to criticize the daughters' educational efforts and their success at selling and distributing print. Conversely, while Catholic priests had minimal issues with spiritual daughters' work as catechists and booksellers, they used devotional prayer manuals to warn against, and seek to curtail, their too-extensive reading habits. In the cases of both these institutions, however, these complaints, made through print or manuscript, rarely translated into actual censure or punishment for the spiritual daughters. Some Reformed authorities tried to prevent the consecration of any new spiritual daughters, and some issued edicts attempting to constrain their dress and behaviour. However, the lack of a hierarchical institution of spiritual daughters made it nearly impossible to discipline or eliminate them.⁶⁹ The survival of Hendrikje Kool's probate inventory, and the extant evidence of spiritual daughters' efforts as educators, readers and booksellers testify to their participation in the print world as part of their inspired vocation. Their work and devotion took place in the context of a culture that

⁶⁷ Leuven, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam*, 11–14.

⁶⁸ Amsterdam, Bibliotheek van het Boekenvak, no. 62 11a–h, Allard Pierson, letter to the officers of the book guild, online at: <http://cf.hum.uva.nl/nhl/marskramers/archivalia_18e_eeuw.htm>, accessed 20 June 2020.

⁶⁹ The 1581 Book Edict, for example, contained some of these prohibitions: see Roobol, *Disputations by Decree*, 172–3; Spaans, *De Levens der Maechden*, 23–5.

prioritized literary discourse, as did the criticism of them by both internal and external institutions. Though not recorded in her own hand, Hendrikje's probate inventory is a unique preserved example of this phenomenon.

On 5 November 1697, a newspaper in Haarlem, just outside of Amsterdam, publicized the auction of Hendrikje Kool's household effects. 'On Tuesday, 12 November', the advertisement read, 'the posthumous books and goods of Hendrickje Kool will be sold in her bookshop, on the Warmoesstraat in Amsterdam.'⁷⁰ While many private Catholic libraries were sold in exactly this way through an advertised sale, for a woman so intimately involved in the book trade this carried a particularly poignant meaning. In a fitting end to her textual ministry, the mechanism of the public auction made her stock available to her friends, customers and co-religionists in Amsterdam. Inspired spiritual daughters such as Hendrikje maximized the ambiguity of their de-institutionalized roles to work actively in their communities as evangelists, teachers, readers and tradeswomen. The text-oriented public discourse of the Dutch Republic meant that the dual criticism they faced from Catholic and Reformed religious institutions remained in the realm of public critique. Their participation in this world, as well as their semi-religious existence, allowed them to pursue their inspired vocation as members of a vocal minority, mediated through the trade of confessional books.

⁷⁰ *Oprecht Haerlemse Dingsdaegse Courant* no. 45, 5 November 1697.